

MAN’S NEED FOR DIVINE AUTHORITY

John Isaac Edwards

Men recognize the need for authority in the home, the work place, the school system and society. There also exists the need for authority in religion. The nature and history of man reveal a definite need for divine authority. The way of man is not in himself (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 14:12). Thus, we must look to something beyond ourselves. Romans 1:18-32 shows that without respect for divine authority men became “fools” (v. 22), and were given to “uncleaness” (v. 24), “vile affections” (v. 26) and a “reprobate mind” (v. 28). Man’s need for divine authority is as old as man himself. Let us be impressed with our need for divine authority as expressed in the Old Testament and observed in the New Testament.

1) EXPRESSED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:16-17; Chap. 3). God commanded, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Notice God’s law was both permissive (declaring what may be done without incurring a penalty) and prohibitory (restraining from what is to be forborne). When

Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they acted without divine authority! As a result, they died that day in that they were sent forth from the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:23-24).

Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:1-7; Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:17).

Genesis 4 shows “the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.” The Lord told Cain, “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.” Why the difference? Hebrews 11 informs us Abel offered “by faith.” Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). Thus, Abel’s offering was accepted because his sacrifice was according to the word of God.

Lot’s wife (Gen. 19:17, 26).

Fleeing Sodom, Lot’s family was warned, “Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.” When Lot’s wife looked back, an act unauthorized by the Lord, “she became a pillar of salt.”

Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2). These two sons of Aaron “offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not.” Some translations render this:

“unauthorized fire”, “contrary to his command” or “which he had not commanded them.”

When Nadab and Abihu did that which the Lord did not authorize, “there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.”

Uzzah (Num. 4:15; 2 Sam. 6:6-7). God commanded not to touch any holy thing, lest you die. Did God really mean that? When “Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it”, “God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.” God means what He says!

Achan (Josh. 6:18-19; Chap. 7). Israel was instructed to keep themselves from the accursed or devoted thing. The record shows that Achan “took of the accursed thing.” As a result of his unauthorized actions, Israel was defeated on the battlefield, 36 men were smitten, the hearts of the people melted, he and all that he had was stoned with stones and burned with fire!

King Saul (1 Sam. 15:1-3, 9, 26). The Lord commissioned Saul to “go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not...” “But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of

fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.” This is known as the sin of omission. Saul was told, “... thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.”

King Uzziah (2 Chr. 26:16-21). Uzziah “went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense.” There was no authority for him to do this as such belonged to the priests. 80 priests said unto him, “*It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honor from the Lord God.*” Yet, when he persisted to act without authority he was smitten with leprosy and cut off from the house of the Lord!

2) OBSERVED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Matthew 7:21-23. The principle is established that we must do the Father’s will. Jesus will say to workers of iniquity, “*I never knew you: depart from*

me...” Another word for iniquity is “lawlessness.” Lawlessness is “...the condition of one without law, either because ignorant of it, or because violating it” (Thayer’s Lexicon).

Matthew 13:41-43. Those in the Lord’s kingdom “*which do iniquity*” will be “*cast...into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*”

Matthew 15:1-9. The scribes and Pharisees transgressed the commandment of God by their tradition. What they said was contrary to God’s authority. This rendered their worship vain!

Matthew 21:12-13; John 2:13-16. The temple cleansing of Jesus expresses man’s need for divine authority in religious matters. Their use of the temple did not fit the authorized spiritual purpose of the temple! Are there some things in churches today that the Lord might just say, “*Take these things hence*”?

Romans 6:23; 1 John 3:4. “*For the wages of sin is death...*” Sin is defined as “*the transgression of the law.*” The fact that transgression or lawlessness brings death

expresses the need for us to stay within the law.

Romans 16:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15. Those who do things contrary to the doctrine of Christ are to be marked and avoided. This shows we must stay within God’s authority.

Colossians 3:17. “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus...*” All teaching and practice must be by the Lord’s authority. If the Lord has not authorized it, we do not have the right to teach or practice it.

2 John 9; Revelation 22:18-19. Great blessings come to those who act with God’s approval. Severe penalties are in store for those who disregard the authority of Christ and the word of God.

Man has always needed divine authority for all that he says and does. Our words and deeds will be judged by the word of Christ (Mt. 12:36-37; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jn. 12:48). Thus, we must make certain what we say and do is divinely authorized.

The Terre Haute **SPEAKER** is published weekly by the church of Christ at Terre Haute, Indiana.

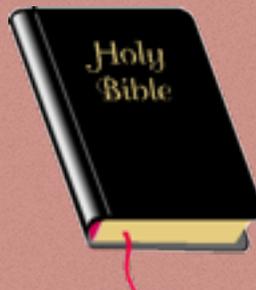
Assembling At:

4017 E Margaret DR
Terre Haute, IN 47803
[Exit 11 (I-70) W on HWY 46,
W on Margaret DR approx. 1 mile]

Assembling Times:

Sunday @ 10:00 a.m. & 3:00 p.m.
Wednesday @ 7:00 p.m.

Come be with us!



We Speak Where the Bible Speaks.

We Are Silent Where the Bible Is Silent.

We Do Bible Things in Bible Ways.

www.churchofchristatterrehaute.com